DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 404 648 CS 215 739

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TITLE Integrating Literature and Composition: A Practical Curriculum.

PUB DATE Mar 97

NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (48th, Phoenix, AZ, March 12-15, 1997).

PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS *College English; *Curriculum Development; *Educational Change; *English Departments; Higher Education; *Literature Appreciation; Majors (Students); Rhetoric; Writing (Composition); *Writing Instruction

IDENTIFIERS *Composition Literature Relationship; Curriculum Emphases; Historical Background; Loyola Marymount University CA

ABSTRACT

The English department at Loyola Marymount University (LMU) is trying to create an environment where all voices are heard and respected, both those of the literarists and compositionists. Where it is probably more customary to think of curriculum as a reflection of faculty values, the guiding principle at LMU has been that curriculum can influence faculty values. Since 1968, LMU has had a two-track English major that gives undergraduate students the opportunity to emphasize either writing or literature. Over the following 15 years (1968-1983), the two-track major grew in popularity--the number of English majors gradually increased, and the writing-emphasis program added a few new courses. Writing students accounted for about 30% of the English majors, but the program was minimally integrated. Writing students were thought to benefit from literature courses but the converse was not considered true. Then, two significant events intervened. In 1983, enrollment figures revealed that nearly 50% of the majors had declared a writing emphasis. Second, the department recognized the growing importance of writing in the English curriculum and the rebirth of studies in rhetoric and composition. Over the next 7 years (1983-1990), curriculum changes and a hiring policy seeking faculty who teach both literature and composition helped the department to realize new goals. Curricular changes included adding a new pre-major course sequence and beefing up the writing major requirements and courses. Since 1990, the department has devised a number of upper-division writing and literature integrated courses. (TB)

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Integrating Literature and Composition: A Practical Curriculum

CCCC 97

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Good morning. Ross Winterowd has just aptly described the antagonism that exists in many English departments between literarists and compositionists as a dialect problem. He says compositionists sometimes try to "pass" as literarists, deserting and demeaning their native "culture." He further suggests that literarists have no need to speak the compositionists' language, and don't. Needless to say these dialect problems are real, and are rooted in an unequal distribution of power and an English Department tradition that values belles lettres over rhetorical theory and composition practice. So what do users of a common language do when they're experiencing dialect problems-- when certain speakers occupying common ground can't (or won't) understand one another, and when one dialect is valued more highly than another based on institutional elitism rather than any inherent superiority of the dialects? If James Sledd were with us today, he might suggest that a "linguistics of literarist supremacy" was at work in our English departments. He might go on to say that bidialectalism wasn't the answer. Ross Winterowd says, on the other hand, that the goal of language is univocality, a goal that must always be frustrated, because language exists only in the minds and mouths and pens of human beings, and human beings are inherently "transgressive," untidy creatures who keep changing language to suit their own ends and whims and appetites. So, what's an English department to do?

Trying to learn one another's "dialect" and then code-switching on demand might be possible if both compositionists and literarists were so motivated. But they are not, particularly

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when one dialect is privileged and the other suspect. And if compositionists were to pursue legislating a kind of Rhetorical Ebonics, English departments would likely be further bifurcated. We, all of us, literarists and compositionists, need voices inside our community. And perhaps as important, our students, both budding literary critic and fledgling poet, need voices inside that community that are respected and heard. We are trying, in the English Department at Loyola Marymount University, to create an environment where all these voices are heard, and where all department dialects are prestige dialects. Where the faculty are truly bilingual, able to understand and speak one another's languages. Here's what has happened. Where it's probably more customary to think of curriculum as a reflection of faculty values, the guiding principle at LMU has been that curriculum can influence faculty values. It is fair to say that our integrative philosophy has influenced literarists and compositionists, causing both groups to teach their courses differently.

Since 1968, Loyola Marymount University has had a two-track English major that gives undergraduate students the opportunity to emphasize either writing or literature. At the program's inception, it primarily aimed to provide coursework for traditional literature students planning to attend graduate school, teach at the secondary level, or pursue a career where critical reading and analysis are important (law, for example). Secondarily, it sought to provide a few introductory creative writing courses for students intending to write fiction or nonfiction.

Over the next fifteen years (1968-1983), this two-track major grew in popularity, the number of English majors gradually increased, and the writing-emphasis program added several new writing courses: The Technical Report, Critical Analysis of Film, Drama and Literature; Writing the Article; Writing for Business and Industry; Journalism; Writing for Advertising; and Writing Workshop in Poetry. The writing emphasis could no longer be called a "secondary"

focus in the English department. By the early 1980s, it offered enough upper-division courses to introduce students to a variety of professional writing genres. The writing emphasis accounted for more than 30% of our English majors.

At this stage, the program was minimally integrated. It required that writing students select a minimum of three upper-division literature courses and that all students take a two-course survey of British literature and a Shakespeare course. Further, literature-emphasis students took a sophomore course called Writing about Literature, while writing-emphasis students took Introduction to Creative Writing. Writing students were thought to benefit from literature coursework, but the converse was only minimally true (the department allowed but did not encourage literature students to enroll in up to three writing courses). Literature was considered the serious, rigorous track and the writing program was a Chinese-menu of courses that prepared students for less lofty pursuits. English faculty attitudes toward the two-track program were mixed, but it is fair to say that they considered the literature track the higher calling and the writing track "vocational."

Then two significant events intervened. In 1983, enrollment figures revealed that nearly 50% of the majors had declared a writing emphasis. Second, the department recognized the growing importance of writing in the English curriculum and the rebirth of studies in rhetoric and composition. The department conducted a search for a director of writing who would evaluate and develop the writing-emphasis English major. In 1983, I accepted this directorship with the goal of incorporating new work in rhetoric and composition into the writing-emphasis major. I saw integrating the major's two tracks as an equally important goal. As I envisioned it, the two-track English major would continue to encourage and educate two kinds of students with two distinct goals: those who aspired to careers as writers and those who wanted to study literature.

More important, I wanted our majors to perceive the interrelationships between those goals. With that in mind, I wrote this preface to a handbook for new faculty:

> "We acknowledge the desirability of separate focuses in our writing and literature tracks, but also recognize the necessity of interaction between our students' writing pursuits and their reading pursuits. Because both the creative act and critical act are enhanced by practice in both, our program is designed to be synthesizing. We train our students of literature to read and write effectively; similarly, our writing emphasis students must take literature coursework, must read as well as write.
>
> In fact, *all* upper division English courses should require substantial reading and writing. And our pre-major courses are unique in their dual purpose: to introduce all of our majors to the production, as well as the analysis, of fiction and poetry.
>
> We believe that there is a singular virtue in the ability to consistently produce and recognize excellent texts, a virtue that is socially useful and personally fulfilling. When we read and write, we are not merely manipulating language in the interests of communication; we write and read to discover and create meaning, to reason, and to grow.
>
> The English major at LMU is at the center of our humanistic, liberal arts tradition. Whether our students go on to write fiction or ad copy, whether they pursue graduate studies in law or literature, their undergraduate major seeks to enable them to pursue these goals thoughtfully, reflectively, and skillfully."

Because I also thought it important to create a statement of goals for incoming students, I wrote the following document for interested undergraduates, but there were other implied audiences: our dean, who worried about the quality of the writing track, and some English faculty, who were similarly skeptical about the program's philosophy and rigor.

GOALS OF THE ENGLISH MAJOR/WRITING EMPHASIS

It shouldn't surprise you to discover that the Writing Emphasis-English Major trains students to become writers-- individuals who can find their way in the world using a facility to create texts as a primary strength. But what does that mean? What should it mean? What are the consequences of such training? What benefits do the individual and society receive from it?

Students should graduate from the Writing Emphasis program liberally and professionally schooled, able to create, understand, and analyze good writing. Specifically, they should:

- know and understand the principles of modern rhetorical, critical, and linguistic theories about the writing process *and* product, and, particularly, be able to demonstrate from firsthand experience the interanimate relationship between reading, writing, and thinking
- (They should) be expert readers-- that is, be able to study a text attentively, reflectively, and judiciously, with a heightened awareness uniquely brought about through the demands of craft placed on the student in creating texts

- (They should) know the conventions of different types of writing from having studied both literary and professional texts, and be able to recognize excellence in samples of those types of writing, as well as demonstrate how and why those texts are excellent
- (They should) produce thoughtful, precise, effective, error-free examples of both *creative* and *interpretive* texts. *Creative* writing may be defined as the production of an original text, either fiction or nonfiction, belletristic or professional-- that is, technical writing, business writing, journalistic writing, writing for advertising or public relations; *interpretive* writing may be defined as analysis, explication, refutation, and approbation of texts already in existence
- (They should) be informed of the current market for various types of writing as well as job opportunities in which writing skills are necessary

Although we are touting the advantages of writing as a discipline in itself, we do not intend to imply that the skill of writing is anything but central to the pursuit of excellence in other disciplines-- excellent engineers, excellent historians, excellent businesspersons become that way not only because they have mastered a specialized field of knowledge, but also because they can write, and write well. We do maintain, however, that there is a singular virtue in the ability to consistently produce excellent, effective texts, a virtue that is both socially useful and personally fulfilling. This is because when we write, we are not merely manipulating our language to communicate information; we write both to discover and create meaning, to engender effects, and to reason. Using language thus places demands on any user, whose precision ultimately recreates author, audience, and world through the creation of a text.

Over the next seven years (1983-90), curriculum changes and a hiring policy seeking faculty who could teach both literature and writing helped us realize our new goals and integrative philosophy. Let me emphasize again, our program's definition of literature and writing includes and values creative writing and composition, imaginative (fiction, poetry, and drama) and inventive texts (essays, letters, scientific reports, editorials, biographies, memoirs, non-fiction of all ilks). We pursue the writing and reading of what Ross Winterowd calls the "other" literature, the non-imaginative non-fictional kind. Working together, the English department implemented a series of curricular changes: (1) a new pre-major course sequence, required of *all* majors, that reflects our commitment to the idea that creative and critical acts are mutually beneficial: The two courses in this sequence are Language of Fiction and Language of Poetry, both of which introduce students to creating *and* writing about fiction and poetry; the students enrolled read and analyze fiction or poetry and also have the experience of writing and workshopping their own fiction or poetry, within the confines of the same course. (2) the addition of several cross-listed courses (counting as either literature or writing courses because they incorporate both reading and writing of literature): The Essay; Rhetorical Theory and Practice; Contemporary Literary Criticism; Stylistics; and Prosody; (3) a requirement that all writing-emphasis students take at least nine semester hours in senior-level writing courses (primarily "theory-in-practice" courses); and (4) the encouragement of seniors to enroll in the Writing Internship Program, which gives them writing experience in their choice of a variety of media: advertising, television, law, business, broadcasting, and journalism.

Since 1990 we have taken the next step, eliminating writing and literature cross-listed courses, and have developed a variety of upper-division literature-and-writing integrated courses, where the faculty are demonstrably bilingual-- working with and in the dialects of the literarist

and the compositionist. These courses include The Poetry of Witness, Semiotics of Culture, Rhetoric and Media, Metaphor: Theory and Practice, Time in the Twentieth Century, Advanced Non-Fiction Writing, Writing Workshop in Narrative and Memory, Contemporary Literature: Cross-Cultured and Cross-Gendered, and Critical Theory and the Teaching of Literature. You have syllabi for these courses in your packet, together with the Preface to the LMU Guide for the English Major. I have also included syllabi for our crucial pre-major courses: The Language of Poetry and The Language of Fiction. Our integrative philosophy guides all of these courses, and if you have time to look these syllabi over, you'll notice each course requires substantial reading and writing, and most encourage analytic and "creative" writing, both fiction and non-fiction.

Our enrollment offers evidence of the vitality of our integrated, two-track major, with the number of English majors increasing from 169 in the spring of 1986 to 268 in the spring of 1996, a 37% increase in majors. Of this 268, 65% are writing-emphasis majors. As we continue to refine and improve our program, these numbers may increase. But even more exciting and important to us is helping our students integrate the reading and writing of literature and helping our faculty-- literarist, compositionist, creative writer, and professional writer-- respect one another's voices.